

THE UPPER DAUPHIN SENTINEL

The Stony Creek Valley Coalition (SCVC) created in the "First Fight" was transformed into the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy (CPC).

CPC is a nonprofit, charitable organization with a mission to acquire, preserve, and protect local land and natural resources in South-Central Pennsylvania.

CPC started as a grassroots coalition of concerned citizens, sportsmen, and naturalists who mobilized a recycling program to raise money to save Stony Creek Valley.

Originally named the Stony Creek Valley Coalition, the group was successful in opposing efforts to construct a hydroelectric facility that would flood the valley and destroy important habitat and recreation areas just 10 miles north of Harrisburg. It took several years, but the effort stopped the plans as well as pressed for the designation of Stony Creek as the first protected waterway in the Pennsylvania Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Now a "Second Fight" for Stony Creek Valley was just beginning. The Stony Creek Valley Coalition from the 1970s and 1980s was brought back to life. In early 2005 a few folks gathered at a local watering hole on Stony Creek and decided to use the Upper Dauphin Sentinel as a voice for the opposition.

The first issue of The Upper Dauphin Sentinel was published in January 1972. Sadly, the Sentinel is one of the many print newspapers we have lost due to the digital age and social media. The Sentinel published its final edition on Tuesday, August 31, 2021.

The following is what the Sentinel published in March 2005.

Coalition plans events to save Stony Valley

By Louise James
staff writer

Remember the call to save St. Anthony's Wilderness in the 1970s?

Well, the call to "Save Stony Creek Valley" (aka St. Anthony's Wilderness) once again is echoing across southcentral Pennsylvania.

The Stony Creek Coalition of the 1970s and '80s has been reactivated, members are being recruited and events are being planned to raise citizens' awareness of what the group perceives to be a threat to the wilderness, to sportsmen and to environmental groups.

In the 1970s, the coalition fought industry - the Pennsylvania Power and Light Co.

Now, the coalition is facing off against the government.

This reactivation of the coalition is in response to a discussion ongoing between the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and the state Game Commission, for land in State Game Land No. 211 to be "swapped" over to the guard as a buffer zone around Fort Indiantown Gap.

A preliminary meeting of the coalition was held recently at Manada Gap, Dauphin County, and approximately 80 people were in attendance, according to reports.

Coalition's next public meeting. The next public information meeting will be held Tuesday, April 5 at 7 p.m. at St. Matthew's Parish activity center, located approximately 1 mile out Stony Creek Valley from the Stony Creek Dam in Dauphin Borough.

Bike and Hike Rally Day planned. A "Rally for Stony Creek Valley" is planned for Sunday, April 17, starting at 8 a.m.

Participants are to meet at the Stony Creek game lands' gate, past Ellendale - at the point where the state's annual game land tour usually begins.

Overflow parking will be available at the turnaround where the paved road meets the dirt road, organizers said.

Brochures will be available and petitions will be on site for signature.

People may take a hike or a bike ride, scheduled for the same date, place and time.

Bike ride. The bike ride will travel through the game lands for 17 miles, to Goldmine Road, a 34-mile round trip.

It will be led by Kathy Watts, owner of Wildware Backcountry in Harrisburg.

Hike. Gene Stilp will lead a hike through the game lands for 17 miles to Goldmine Road, a 34-mile round trip.

People who are interested in the bike ride and want to register in advance may call Watts at 921-2173. Interested hikers may call Stilp at 443-6421.

Public urged to attend Game Commission public meeting. The coalition encourages residents to attend the Game Commission's public meetings Monday and Tuesday, April 25 and 26 at 8:30 a.m. and speak out against the land swap.

The meetings will be held at the Game Commission's headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg.

Updates on activities. To keep up to date on activities planned by the Stony Creek Coalition, citizens may go to ["http://www.savestonyvalley.com"](http://www.savestonyvalley.com)

Background. In the 1970s the Stony Creek Coalition fought PPL, which wanted to build a hydroelectric plant in the valley. The coalition won the fight, with the help of then-state Rep. Jeffrey Piccola.

Piccola drafted a Wild and Scenic Act in 1980 to protect the watershed from development, and it was signed by then-Gov. Dick Thornburgh.

Guard wants land for buffer zone. The Guard wants between 1,800 and 2,100 acres of state Game Land that is adjacent to the installation's boundary on Second Mountain in Lebanon and Dauphin counties.

The land is located near the peak of Second Mountain and runs to the mountain's northern base in Stony Valley.

According to reports, the land under dispute is bounded on the east by Cold Spring Road in Cold Spring Twp., Lebanon County and the western border goes into Middle Paxton Twp., in Dauphin County. The northern border reportedly is at the foot of Stony Mountain, some 50 meters short of Stony Creek.

Jerry Feaser, spokesman for the Game Commission, referred the Sentinel to the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

The land is to serve as a buffer zone and safety zone for future firing ranges along the Gap's border, according to the DMVA's Web site.

"There will be no impact on hunters, sportsmen, bikers, hikers or anglers using Stony Creek or the Rails-to-Trails in Stony Valley," Col. Ray Hulings, commander of the Fort Indiantown Gap Training Site, is quoted as saying on the Web site.

The Guard would allow hunting in the area, consistent with the military training mission, said Joseph Hovis, installation wildlife biologist.

The Guard reportedly allows people to hunt and fish on its land - when it is not in use for Army training.

Lt. Col. Chris Cleaver, spokesman for the DMVA, told the Sentinel that the Guard would not build, put in roads, or timber the buffer zone. The land "will look in the future as it is today," he said.

According to the DMVA Web site, the Gap officials "plan to build parking areas along the top of Second Mountain to increase access to the land, undertake a number of flora and fauna surveys and incorporate the new area into our wildlife research and management programs."

Cleaver said a part of the land swap originally had included some land in the area of DeHart Dam in Clark's Valley "but that did not work out."

Therefore, "We have asked the Game Commission to choose land and are awaiting their list," he said.

The Guard reportedly had planned to purchase approximately 2,000 acres of land around the DeHart Reservoir, owned by the Harrisburg City Authority, and swap this land with land owned by the Game Commission, on state Game Lands No. 211. This area includes the upper portion of Stony Creek Valley to Goldmine Road.

This discussion reportedly has been ongoing between the Guard and the Game Commission since May 2004.

Environmental groups also opposed to plan. In November 2004, both the Governor Pinchot Group of the Pennsylvania Sierra Club and the Audubon Pennsylvania society announced their opposition to the proposed transfer of land.

According to the Pinchot Group's Web site, the difference between the Gap's site and the game lands was "dramatic" with the Gap's land "heavily roaded and eroded with numerous clearcuts" and the game lands "as close to pristine wilderness as one will find."

In addition, the Bush Administration has been working to exempt military facilities from most environmental rules, the Web site said.

The Audubon Pennsylvania's Web site says that this game land is an important bird area, not only for songbirds but also for "sensitive species such as the timber rattlesnake, bobcat and Allegheny woodrat."

Although the Guard says it has no plans to develop the land, there is no outside control over it after it is transferred, the site said.

Such a transfer of land to the military "would set a terrible precedent statewide." And "There is increasing pressure nationally to divert wildlife and park lands to inappropriate uses," the site said.